

“As we have clearly stated, the SLM will only participate in full negotiations when all stakeholders will have a true, unfettered voice at both the regional and national level and no longer under the gun of the forces of the old order,” he stressed. (*Sudan Tribune* 31/3)

Sudan on March 16th announced a state of emergency and a near-total closure of its borders to tackle the coronavirus pandemic. Separately, the country’s ruling Sovereign Council “decided to close all airports, land and sea border crossings, except to humanitarian aid,” spokesman Mohammad al-Fakki Suleiman told journalists.

On March 24th, authorities imposed an indefinite night-time curfew from 8pm to 6am local time. They have also announced the suspension of all interstate bus services starting March 26th. Sudan has also shuttered schools and universities across the country.

On March 25th, state media reported that the authorities had ordered the release of thousands of prisoners to prevent the novel coronavirus from spreading in the country’s jails. (© *AFP* 16,25/3 2020)

The World Health Organisation (WHO) has listed Sudan as at risk for a pandemic spread due to a lack of preparatory procedures and health facilities. In Khartoum, a group of doctors launched a public campaign to raise awareness of the virus and the steps people must take to avoid infection. Doctors were distributing free hand sanitisers and soap, and giving out information on social media and in cars with loudspeakers. (*VOA* 28/3) **Juba talks extended p.22634B**

## TUNISIA

### Exceptional Measures

#### The army is deployed to enforce a Covid-19 lockdown.

President **Kais Saïed** on March 20th declared a nationwide, round-the-clock self-isolation of inhabitants to combat the spread of the novel coronavirus in the country, after an increase in confirmed cases.

On March 26th, parliament passed a bill approving exceptional measures to deal with the Covid-19 crisis. Tunisian media also relayed the authorities’ announcement that starting on March 27th, all individuals circulating in private vehicles without the necessary paperwork would see their vehicles confiscated.

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The Defence Ministry announced it was boosting the police and military presence across Tunisia to enforce the lockdown. The three hundred military patrols deployed on March 23rd would be increased as of March 24th and accompanied by air patrols in the governorates of Greater Tunis, Bizerte, Sfax and Gabes, as well as in the regions of Ben Guerdane and Djerba, state-run *TAP* news agency cited a ministry statement as saying.

“National army units will enforce the law with rigour against those violating the provisions of general lockdown,” Defence Ministry spokesperson Mohamed Zekri told *TAP*. (*BBC Monitoring* 24,27/3)

The interior minister, **Hichem Mechichi** on March 23rd ordered the closure of 412 cafes, restaurants, bars and other places of gathering and the arrest of 386 persons for not respecting the order banning such spots.

The Health Ministry said it was preparing to launch a mobile phone app to carry out surveillance of those who have been asked to self-isolate.

The Interior Ministry said on March 30th that 1,031 citizens had been detained for breaking curfew rules, with 197 of those citizens put in quarantine.

Meanwhile President Saïed on March 31st ordered the release of nearly 1,500 prisoners under a special pardon as part of the country’s measures to prevent the spread of Covid-19. (*BBC Monitoring* 19,30,31/3; *PANA* 24/3)

Several inhabitants in areas around Tunis demonstrated on March 31st against delays in the disbursement of social benefits recently announced by the authorities for low-income families struggling due to the impact of the spread of coronavirus. According to *AFP*, “hundreds” of people took to the streets again on March 31st in the same neighbourhoods to protest against the lockdown and call for the promised benefits. (*BBC Monitoring* 31/3)

**Suicide Attack Arrests:** Five people had been arrested over a double suicide attack that killed a police officer near the United States (US) embassy in Tunis on March 6th, *AFP* reported the prosecution as saying on March 10th.

The noon explosion rocked the Berges du Lac district hosting the highly fortified embassy. There was no immediate claim of responsibility for the attack. Tunisian media reported that the two suicide bombers were men from Tunis who had served their sentences after being found guilty on terror charges in 2014.

The official *TAP* news agency reported on March 20th that three people facing charges related to the bombing were

placed in custody and that two other people facing charges would for now be released, and that investigations would continue “later”. (*Sources as referenced in text*) **Terrorist attacks and sentences p.22636B**

## UGANDA

### Strict Covid-19 Measures

#### The army chief apologises over the violent dispersal of people in public spaces.

President **Yoweri Museveni** on March 30th ordered an immediate 14-day nationwide lockdown in a bid to halt the spread of the coronavirus. The previous week, the country sealed its borders and urged the population to stay home, but stopped short of a full shutdown. Schools, places of entertainment and worship, and some agricultural markets were shut for a month and people banned from using public transport, and being more than three to a car, or one on a private motorbike.

Museveni also ordered a 14-day nationwide curfew from 7:00pm. People are still allowed to move around on foot but not to gather in groups of more than five at a time.

In recent days, opposition leaders **Kizza Besigye** and **Bobi Wine** had undertaken small-scale food deliveries to people who had lost their incomes due to earlier restrictions, but Museveni criticised such actions as “cheap politics”.

“I direct the police to arrest the opportunistic and irresponsible politicians who tried to distribute food,” he said. “Anybody arrested in that effort will be charged with attempted murder.”

On March 26th police and soldiers in the capital beat fruit vendors, marketgoers and people in bars with batons in a bid to disperse people gathering in groups. Following a public outcry, army chief General David Muhoozi on March 30th apologised for those actions, describing them as “high-handed, unjustified and regrettable” and said the culprits would be “dealt with”. Police said on March 27th that two men were in hospital after being shot for violating restrictions on transport.

Meanwhile, Uganda, host to some 1.4m asylum seekers, on March 30th blocked entry to further arrivals over the next 30 days. (© *AFP* 27,30/3 2020)

Ugandan hospitals say they have suspended some health services following the coronavirus outbreak. Medical doctors have recommended that non-emergency services in hospitals would be suspended to reduce congestion and save on the supplies as they prepare to manage the spread of coronavirus disease. (*BBC Monitoring* 27/3)

At least three inmates were shot dead as they tried to escape from Arua government prisons on March 21st. Speaking to *Daily Monitor*, the northern regional prisons commander, George Lenga, confirmed that the three were shot dead as they escaped from the prisons on grounds that they were unsafe over the outbreak of coronavirus. (*Daily Monitor* 21/3)

**Presidential Hopeful Arrested:** Police have arrested **Henry Tumukunde**, a retired general who plans to stand for president, for suspected treason. In a statement on March 13th, police said Tumukunde, a former Museveni ally and ex-security minister, was accused of enlisting “the support of a neighbouring country to support him in removing the current leadership” - an apparent reference to **Rwanda**. Relations between Uganda and Rwanda have been strained for more than a year over accusations that they support each other's dissidents.

“My offices and residence under siege. Being put under arrest under presumed treason charges,” the 60-year-old wrote on Twitter on March 12th.

Uganda is due to hold a presidential election early in 2021. The president has been accused by government critics and rights campaigners of using tactics including intimidation by security forces to maintain his grip on power. (*aljazeera.com* 13/3)

**Attack Blamed on DRC Rebels:** The Uganda People's Defence Forces (UPDF) has attributed a deadly attack on March 6th on its detachment in Zombo district (north) to a group of armed elements operating in neighbouring DR Congo. The army says the gang of attackers totalling 80, which invaded the Bombo base, was mobilised from areas of Paidha, Nyapea, Zeu, Zaale, Songoli, Atyak and a few from Warr in Uganda.

In a statement on March 9th, UPDF disputed media reports that these were trained in Kiryandongo forest and said they were facilitated by a Congolese militia.

Three UPDF soldiers were killed and the motive of the attackers was yet to be established. An army spokesman described the attack as “suicidal”. (*Chimp Reports* 6,10/3)

## ZIMBABWE

### Coronavirus Lockdown

**Police patrol streets as a countrywide shutdown begins.**

Zimbabwean authorities on March 30th began enforcing a three-week lockdown in its fight against the spread of Covid-

19. President **Emmerson Mnangagwa** declared a 21-day “total” lockdown from March 30th curtailing movement within the country, shutting most shops and suspending flights in and out of Zimbabwe.

Police mounted checkpoints on routes leading to Harare's central business district, stopping cars and turning away pedestrians who had no authorisation to be in the area. Elsewhere, truckloads of metropolitan and national police armed with batons were on patrol, ordering people back to their homes.

“We don't want to see people here on the streets. We don't want to see people who have no business in town just loitering,” a policewoman said through a loud hailer. “Everyone to their homes.” Police in riot gear dispersed people standing in small groups at the Copacabana minibus terminus, which is usually abuzz with people including foreign currency dealers.

For many of the country's 16m people, who are already suffering a grim economic recession, the lockdown means even tougher hardship. Some in Harare were trying to leave the city for rural villages. “We would rather spend the 21 days at our rural home, where we don't have to buy everything. I can't afford to feed my family here when I am not working,” said Most Jawure.

In second city Bulawayo, located in the southwest, police on horseback and others on bicycles were dispersing people at marketplaces. Kelvin Moyo, an informal trader from Bulawayo's Entumbane township, complained about the short notice given to prepare for the lockdown. “We only had the weekend to set aside food for 21 days,” said Moyo. “Food is now expensive in Zimbabwe and money is hard to come by.”

“We live from hand to mouth,” he said. “In reality, we are all doomed. I am just praying something will come up mid-way, or else me and my wife and kids, we will die of hunger.” (© *AFP* 30/3 2020)

**Civil Servants to Rotate Duty Shifts:** Civil servants will now rotate duty shifts starting March 27th after President Mnangagwa ordered all government employees to take turns to report for duty as the state begins to take measures to reduce contact among the population.

Teachers, who make up the majority of the workers in the public service, are already on an indefinite leave after government directed schools and tertiary institutions to close on March 24th. More than 158,994 civil servants are on the government's payroll.

All government departments and ministries will have one third of their staff at

work for two weeks; two thirds will be at home, and after two weeks, another one third will come in and the other two thirds remain at home. (*ZBC Radio Zimbabwe* 25/3)

### IN BRIEF

**Algeria:** President **Abdelmadjid Tebboune** ordered a total lockdown of the northern Blida province - the epicentre of the coronavirus epidemic in the country - as efforts to stem its spread were ramped up. Privately owned *Echourouk* website reported on March 23rd that the president had placed Blida under a 10-day lockdown and the capital Algiers under a partial curfew. (*BBC Monitoring* 23/3)

**Angola:** On March 25th President **João Lourenço** declared a state of emergency from March 27th, as part of the measures to fight the coronavirus pandemic. On March 31st Ministry of Interior spokesperson Waldemar Jose said that the police had detained 37 individuals throughout the country over violations of the directives imposed in light of the emergency. He also apologised for the “excesses” of some members of the force and reiterated that law enforcement agents who broke the law would be brought to justice. (*angop.ao* 25, 31/3)

**Benin:** President **Patrice Talon** announced on March 29th that Benin could not enforce public confinement because it lacked the “means of rich countries” to fight the Covid-19 pandemic. He did announce from March 30th a *cordon sanitaire* around eight major urban areas, including the business capital Cotonou where public transport was halted. But questions have been asked about the lack of protective measures. A student demonstration at Cotonou's Abomey-Calvi university earlier in March calling for classes to be halted ended with one protester dead. Schools, churches and mosques were ordered to close on March 22nd. (© *AFP* 29/3 2020)

**Botswana:** Two men convicted of murder were executed on March 28th in one of the few democracies to still enforce the death penalty. The latest executions bring to four the number of hangings since President **Mokgweetsi Masisi** was elected in October 2019. Moabi Seabelo Mabiletsa, 33, and his co-accused Matshidiso Tshid Boikanyo, 39, were hanged in the capital Gaborone, the prison services said in a statement. The two were handed the death sentence for the murder of a taxi driver in 2014. (© *AFP* 28/3 2020)

**Burundi:** Clashes between a mysterious armed group and the security forces supported by groups of youth took place in the last week of February, with the reported deaths of up to 22 “rebels” and two police officers. Civil society groups also condemned the extrajudicial execution of about 10 prisoners, calling them an “act of barbarism” by the security forces and the youth group known as ‘**Imbonerakure**’, which the United Nations (UN) describes as a militia. (*Radio France Internationale* 29/2)

**Central African Republic:** At least 13 people were killed in fighting in Ndele town in the northern province of Bamingui-Bangoran between rival factions of the Popular Front for the Rebirth of Central Africa (**FPRC**), one